Internal strategies

Variety is spice, but choose well

Shop before you buy is good advice, especially when a major purchase is involved. Expeditions to furniture retail floors reveal an extraordinary variety of products in all price ranges available for the home environment.

This variety presents so many options, you may become confused and unsure of what you want. Or, you may have been disappointed with a previous selection that did not serve you well.

To avoid confusion new and disappointment later, take time to plan your purchases. Whether furnishing an entire home or choosing a piece or two, the most pleasing results start with a plan.

Spontaneity important

Spontaneity has a place in decorating, but major furniture purchases should be chosen with care so you get maximum return on your investment in the form of more attractive surroundings, increased comfort and greater function.

You enjoy rooms that are a source of personal satisfaction, and furniture that provides the storage, display, work areas or chairside convenience you especially need.

Develop floor plan

To develop a plan, use pencil, paper and a tape measure to draw a scaled floor plan of the room, including doors, windows, heating and electrical outlets as well as unusual architectural features.

Simple scaled drawings of the furniture you intend to keep can be cut out and moved around on your floor plan as you consider possible room arrangements.

Keep in mind factors such as a fireplace or window view you might want as a focal point, existing colors and patterns of carpeting, draperies or other uphostered pieces you'll continue using.

Think about the room's orientation. A dark room with cold northern exposure calls for warm, light colors and cheerful patterns. A sunny room facing south or west is more inviting in cool colors and subdued patterns.

As your work, you'll begin to see how much space is available for that new sofa, whether an outlet will be near the new end table, and what colors and patterns will be best in an overall decorating plan.

"Wants" and "needs"

Then, compile two lists, one your "Wants," and the other your "Needs." Choices are quickly narrowed when wants and needs coincide, such as more open shelves for books and collectibles.

However, what if you always wanted a graceful French settee but need furniture that can withstand the wear of active children and pets?

A formal style covered in damask would be fine in a room used primarily by adults, but a hardy Country French settee covered in a rugged fabric treated to resist spills and soils will suit you better.

One advantage of the great variety of furniture available is that it helps you match up your wants, needs and budget. Planning is the key.

A good plan is important for any area of the home-bedroom, dining area, hall, den, children's room.

Always remember how you live and what you expect from your furniture in the way of performance. Do you want it to last a lifetime or do you plan to replace this furniture in a few years?

Take your floor plan and lists with you when you shop. Refer to them frequently. Ask questions. Find out what might be available through catalogs.

Keep looking until you find the furniture that will suit you and your home to at "t."

Use care when choosing your contractor

A wise consumer takes the guesswork out of shopping by knowing what to look for when hiring a contarctor.

When it comes to shopping for a capable and reliable remodeling contractor, a wise homemaker does the same.

Because your home is probably the largest investment you'll ever make, you should take as much care in selecting the contractor as you do in planning the remodeling.

Know what to look for and what to avoid, in the long run it will mean savings in time, worry and--above all--money.

Beware of a contractor touting a "bargain' His low bid could be either a result of low-quality building materials or the addition of "extra" costs once the job is underway.

Avoid someone who moonlights as a contractor. A person who does remodeling "on the side" may be less expensive, but he may also be less professional and able.

To eliminate the guesswork in selecting a professional remodeling contractor, the National Home Improvement Council offers the following suggestions:

-Since professional contractors have established their reputations on satisfied customers and longevity in business, one of the best sources of information could be word of mouth.

Ask friends and neighbors who've recently completed a remodeling project. They should be an excellent source for leads and you'll be able to inspect the work that was done.

-If you've hired an architect ot designer to plan your home improvement, ask them for the names of several contractors. Lumber dealers, home centers, and hardware stores may also be good sources.

-Once you've compiled a list of prospective contractors, check their references with local building or planing departments, the Chamber of Commerce and the Bettr Business Bureau.

Reputable contractors should be willing to provide you with references. Those who hesitate probably have something to hide.

-Another good source is local chapters of professional contractors' associations. The National Home Improvement Council for example, is comprised of more than 3,000 professionals nationwide. Contractors belonging to NHIC pledge to observe the "highest standards of integrity, frankness and responsibility in dealing with the public.

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Deodorizing your carpets

Carpetbaggers roamed the South during the year of reconstruction following the Civil War, at just about the same time that the "carpetbragger" was born.

Who-or what-is the carpetbragger? It's Arm & Hammer Baking Soda, the 100 percent pure sodium bicarbonate that has been a familiar, trusted brand for more than 130 years.

The Arm & Hammer trademark dates back to 1867. James Church, son of one of the founders of Church & Dwight Company, Inc. (makers of Arm & Hammer Baking Soda), ran a spice and mustard company called the Vulcan Spice Mills.

When James joined his father's baking soda business, he brought with him the trademark depicting the arm of Vulcan, god of fire, with hammer in hand about to strike an anvil. The brand was first patented in 1878.

Arm & Hammer Baking Soda has been deodorizing refrigerators, freezers, cat litter pans and even sink drains for years.

So, when it comes to deodorizing carpets, the folks at Church & Dwight have a right to brag. After all, they're the "odor experts."

Expensively packaged carpet deodorizers have become increasingly popular in recent years. So, now it's time to boast about the true facts of eliminating carpet odors.

"Ordinary baking soda is your best bet for a carpet deodorizer, because it holds and neutralizes odors," says Norman Usen, Manager of Product Development at Church & Dwight's Research and Development Laboratories.

"Most of the other commercial carpet deodorizers merely mask odors with a perfume cover-up. Some of these commercial deodorizers do contain baking soda, but in amounts insuffficient to eliminate odors effectively."

Baking soda is a natural deodorizer that neutralizes most types of carpet odors, includiing cooking odors, pet accidents, cigarette smoke and musty smells.

And, since baking soda is a natural product of food grade purity, it is safe to use around children and pets.

To deodorize carpets with baking soda, sprinkle about ⅔ cup over each 9' x 12' area of carpet. A flour sifter or sieve will make distribution over the entire area easier.

For best results, wait at least 15 minutes, then vacuum carpet as usual. For problem odors, wait overnight before vacuuming.

NOTE: avoid use on wet carpet. Also, test for colorfastness. Mix ½ tablespoon baking soda in ½ cup water, and pour a small amount of the solution on an inconspicuous area of the carpet. Let dry, then vacuum as usual.

Decline in rental units to continue

The decline in rental units is expected to continue in the 1980's, according to economist, Michael Sumichrist.

Sumichrist says the continual decline will be due to a population that still favors home ownership over renting, and a trend towards condominium conversions and cooperatives.

A special kind of protection

The Home Owners Warranty protection plan is expected to cover approximately one-fourth of the new homes built this year, according to HOW Corp.

Under the plan, participating builders provide the homeowner with a 10-year warranty and additional insurance against major structural defects.

Flower bed is as good as a living picture

Enjoyable picture may be alive and outside the window. A flower-bed--alive with color, fragrance and pattern the whole year--can be a beautiful addition to a room's decor.

It changes as different flowers bloom in the spring, summer and fall. In the winter, green shrubs and berries can take the place of the flowers.

This picture can be planned as much as a center of interest inside a room, said Virginia Tech Extension specialist in home furnishings Katherine L. Habel.

"Remember, the sky is the ceiling and grass or earth is the floor covering. A flowering tree such as dogwood, will soften the lines," the specialist said.

Sizes and proportion are important. For each planting, collect such information as the heights of plants and time of planting and blooming. For some periods, design a one color garden. At another time, the contrast or a mass of color makes an exciting picture.

"If you have a special fondness for some flowers that will not grow in your soil, you might try planting in boxes and boxes, said the faculty member in Tech's College in Home Economics. "I like this as I can bring the box inside for special occasions or change the arrangement as new flowers are added."

Those who have enjoyed the sitting inside and looking at the beauty of the flower garden, often plant more and more enjoying both the fun of gardening and the beauty of the view, Miss Habel said.

Before you build

Planning is important

Though time is said "to wait for no man", anyone who doesn't take it when planning a home improvement is rash.

Such planning should include satisfying building codes, advises the National Home Improvement Council. Established by most cities, towns and counties, building codes vary from one community to another.

As a general rule, a building permit is required whenever structural work is involved or when the basic living area of a home is to be changed, adds the Council.

For example, if you have a house with an unfinished section that you want to complete as a room, you would need a building permit in most localities. This is because you have changed the area from storage to living space.

Any reputable home improvement contractor should be able to take care of the complex details involving building permits. You pay any fee required by your municipality and are responsible for any penalties for failure to file required permits.

But, you shouldn't fear these matters if you hire a reputable contractor who knows the rules. Have all such restrictions and fees spelled out in your contract.

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